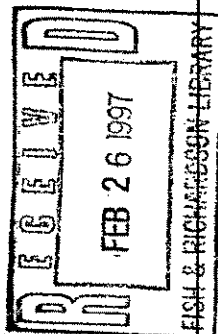Q

Dictionary of Computer and Internet Terms

Fifth Edition

Douglas A. Downing, Ph.D.
School of Business and Economics
Seattle Pacific University

Michael A. Covington, Ph.D.
Artificial Intelligence Center
The University of Georgia

Melody Mauldin Covington
Graphic Designer
Athens, Georgia

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Douglas Downing teaches economics at Seattle Pacific University. He is the author of several books in Barron's Easy Way series including *Computer Programming in BASIC*, *Computer Programming in Pascal* (with Mark Yoshimi), *Algebra, Trigonometry, Calculus, and Statistics* (with Jeff Clark). He is also the author of *Business Statistics* and *Quantitative Methods* (both with Jeff Clark for the Barron's Business Review series), *Computers and Business Tasks*, and *Dictionary of Mathematics Terms*, all published by Barron's Educational Series, Inc. He holds the Ph.D. degree in economics from Yale University.

Michael Covington is a research scientist and teacher in natural language processing and artificial intelligence at the University of Georgia. He is a contributing editor for *PC Techniques* and *Electronics Now* magazines and is the author of *Computer Science Study Keys* (published by Barron's), *Prolog Programming in Depth* (with Donald Nute), *Astrophotography for the Amateur*, *Syntactic Theory in the High Middle Ages*, and numerous articles in scholarly journals and computer and electronics magazines. He holds the Ph.D. degree in linguistics from Yale University.

Melody Mauldin Covington is a graphic designer living in Athens, Georgia. She is author of *Dictionary of Desktop Publishing* (published by Barron's) and was formerly art director of *The Marietta Daily Journal* and *Neighbor Newspapers* in suburban Atlanta.

PROPORTIONAL PITCH

example, the properties of an icon specify what it looks like and what should happen when the user clicks on it.

PROPORTIONAL PITCH the use of characters with different widths in a single typeface. For example, in proportional-pitch type, *M* is wider than *I*. Compared to a fixed-pitch typewriter or printer, this improves the appearance of the type and makes it more readable. Most books and newspapers are set in proportional type. *See* TYPE; TYPEFACE. For picture, *see* PITCH.

Because the letters are of different widths, it is not possible to count letter spaces in proportional-pitch type the way one does on a typewriter. *See* TYPESETTING MISTAKES.

PROPRIETARY owned by a specific company or individual. A feature of a computer is proprietary if one company has exclusive rights to it.

PROPRINTER a dot-matrix printer made by IBM that recognizes Epson control codes and supports Epson-compatible graphics modes. *See* EPSON.

PROTECTED MODE the mode in which an 80286, 80386, 80486, or Pentium microprocessor can access the largest possible amount of memory. In this mode, these processors can only run programs designed for protected mode, not programs designed for earlier processors such as the 8088. In Microsoft Windows and OS/2, the user can switch between protected mode (for running Windows or OS/2 programs) and real mode or multiple virtual 8086 mode (for running DOS programs).

In protected mode, different parts of memory are allocated to different programs, and memory is "protected" in the sense that a program can only write to the memory allocated to it. *Contrast* REAL MODE; MULTIPLE VIRTUAL MODE.

PROTOCOL a standard way of regulating data transmission between computers. *See* HANDSHAKING; X-OFF; X-ON; XMODEM; KERMIT.

PROXY SERVER a computer that saves information acquired from elsewhere on the INTERNET and makes it available to other computers in its immediate area. For example, if several users connect to the same WEB SITE through a proxy server, each page of information will be downloaded from that site only once and then provided to all the users.

A disadvantage of proxy servers is that they make it impossible to count HITS accurately.

PS/1 *see* IBM PC.

PS/2 *see* IBM PC.

PS 2 an advanced version (Level 2) of the POSTSCRIPT graphics language.

PSEUDOCODE an outline of a computer program, written in a mixture

of a programming language and English. Writing pseudocode is one of the best ways to plan a computer program. For example, here is a pseudocode outline of a Pascal program to find the largest of a set of 10 numbers:

```
begin
  repeat
    read a number;
    test whether it is the largest found so far
  until 10 numbers have been read;
  print the largest
end.
```

Here is the program that results from translating all of the pseudocode into genuine Pascal:

```
PROGRAM findthelargest (INPUT, OUTPUT);
VAR num, largest, count : INTEGER;
BEGIN
  count := 0;
  largest := 0;
  REPEAT
    count := count + 1;
    read(num);
    IF num > largest THEN largest := num;
  UNTIL count = 10;
  writeln('The largest number was ',largest)
END.
```

(This program assumes that the largest number will be greater than zero.)

The advantage of pseudocode is that it allows the programmer to concentrate on how the program works while ignoring the details of the language. By reducing the number of things the programmer must think about at once, this technique effectively amplifies the programmer's intelligence.

PUB the usual name for the DIRECTORY on an FTP SITE that contains files downloadable by the public. *See also* ANONYMOUS FTP.

PUBLIC DOMAIN the status of literature, art, music, or software that is not copyrighted.

A computer program is in the public domain if it is not covered by any kind of copyright. Few substantial public-domain programs exist, but the term "public domain" is often used incorrectly to describe other kinds of freely copyable software (*see* FREE SOFTWARE).

PULL-DOWN MENU a menu that appears when a particular item in a menu bar is selected. *See also* MENU BAR.